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WILLIAM J. CLINTON

**Proclamation 7021 of September 15, 1997**

**50th Anniversary of the National Security Act of 1947**

*By the President of the United States of America*  
*A Proclamation*

The United States emerged from the crucible of World War II to face a political and military landscape changed forever by the events of that conflict. The Soviet Union, a vital ally during the war, was fast becoming an actively hostile and dangerous opponent. And, as the most economically and militarily powerful nation on earth, the United States bore the awesome responsibility of preventing the onset of another and even more destructive world war.

Recognizing these harsh new realities, and wise in the hard lessons of recent history, President Truman and America's other civilian and military leaders determined to create the structures and programs that would guarantee our national security and promote lasting world peace. The result of their efforts was the National Security Act of 1947. This single historic piece of legislation created four extraordinary institutions that continue to serve America superbly a half-century later: the Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council.

The complex task of coordinating the operations of ground, sea, and air forces during World War II demonstrated the need for unified direction of America's Armed Forces in the postwar world. The National Security Act answered that need by establishing the Department of Defense. Under the civilian control of the Secretary of Defense, and fortified by the collective experience, knowledge, and strategic guidance of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the three military departments within the Department of Defense—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—began to work together as a powerful team to integrate the operation and administration of all our Nation's Armed Forces.

Today, the Department of Defense has realized in large measure the objectives stated in the National Security Act. The Armed Forces and the unified commands have achieved a remarkable degree of integration in organization and operations and remain the best-trained, best-equipped, and best-prepared fighting force in the world. Our men and women in uniform stand ready to preserve America's freedom and protect our national interests whenever and wherever they are threatened.

The Second World War also proved the critical importance of air power to the defense of our Nation. With the creation of the United States Air Force as an independent armed service within the Department of Defense, the National Security Act helped to ensure America's mastery of the skies. In the subsequent 50 years, the courage and dedication of the men and women of the United States Air Force have been a constant source of pride and reassurance to the American people.

With equal devotion, the men and women of the Central Intelligence Agency have enabled America to meet the challenges of global leadership for the past half-century. Providing ten Presidents and their administrations with the strategic intelligence to make informed decisions vital to the security of our Nation, these dedicated public servants helped America to fight and win the Cold War. Today, in a world no longer burdened by superpower confrontation, they remain vigilant in the face of more diffuse and complex dangers: from aggression by rogue states and terrorism to the spread of weapons of mass destruction and international drug trafficking.

In creating the National Security Council, the National Security Act of 1947 provided the President with an invaluable forum for the consideration and coordination of domestic, foreign, and military policies related to America's security. Supporting the President, his Cabinet, and his other close advisors with sound judgment, analysis, and advice, the men and women of the National Security Council can reflect with pride on five decades of unparalleled service to our Nation. Through the East-West confrontations of the Cold War to the threshold of the 21st century, the National Security Council has played a vital role in protecting our Nation's security and in preparing us for the challenges of the future.

As we observe the 50th anniversary of the National Security Act of 1947, we pay tribute to the vision and determination of a generation of American civilian and military leaders. Working together, they established the remarkable institutions we celebrate this week; institutions that have helped to secure the peace and prosperity that America enjoys today. The success of their efforts and of the historic legislation enacted half a century ago is reflected in an outstanding record of achievement: nuclear war averted, the Cold War won, and the nations of the world turning to democracy and free markets.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 14 through September 20, 1997, as a time to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Security Act of 1947. I call upon all Americans to observe this anniversary with appropriate programs and activities celebrating the accomplishments of this legislation and honoring the service and sacrifice of the thousands of dedicated Americans who have strived to carry out its mandate for the past five decades.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON